

User Manual for the 15-Day Online Course on RTI
(English Version)

Introduction

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), Government of India in association with the Centre for Good Governance (CGG) has been engaged in running an online certificate course on the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 since September 2009.

This endeavour to propagate the RTI Act has been perceived as a success based on the feedback received from the candidates who have participated in the course.

With a view to make the course more interesting and practical, now it has been conceived to bifurcate the course into two versions, namely – 1) 7-Day Online Course (English) and 2) 15-Day Online Course (English). Thus, a candidate will only be eligible for a course completion certificate once s/he has completed both versions of the online course.

While the 7-day course will be introductory in nature, the 15-day course will be extensive and with a hands-on orientation whereby candidates will have to practically apply the RTI Act during the course. In other words, the 15-day course will be based on the principle of “learning while doing”.

Further, successful completion of the 7-day course will be mandatory in order to be eligible to take the 15-day version of the course. Besides, to be eligible to take the 15-day course a candidate will be required to file an RTI application for “**inspection of records pertaining to disclosures made under Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act**” in any Public Authority dealing with public service delivery activities/programmes like Municipalities, Panchayats, Civil Supplies Department, Drinking Water Supply Department and Public Works Department. At the time of registration for the 15-day course, the candidate has to give reference to such RTI application along with the response s/he has received.

The second aspect of this 15-day hands-on version of the course mandates a candidate to conduct a proactive disclosure (Section 4 (1) (b) of the RTI Act) study of any public authority. Based on the study the candidate will submit a report at the end of the course. This report on the proactive disclosures study will be evaluated on set criteria and accordingly an online certificate will be issued to each successful candidate.

Welcome to the 15-day Online Course on RTI

In this manual you will find a step by step guide as to how to progress about the course. We hope that you will find this user-friendly manual enabling enough to guide you to successfully complete the online course without any glitch.

The user manual has four segments.

1. How to register for the course
2. About the course
3. About system requirements
4. About the homepage
5. About accessing the online course
6. About the pro-active disclosure study

How to Register for the 15-day Online Course

In order to be eligible to take the 15-day course a candidate is required to fulfill the two following eligible criteria.

Eligibility Criteria for the 15-day Online Course

- One must successfully complete the 7-day online course.
- One must file an RTI application seeking “**inspection of records pertaining to disclosures made under Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act**” in any Public Authority dealing with public service delivery activities/programmes like Municipalities, Panchayats, Civil Supplies Department, Drinking Water Supply Department and Public Works Department.

Once an RTI application is filed in a public authority, a candidate is expected to receive a response within a maximum of 35 days. The candidate is required to visit the site <http://rtiocc.cgg.gov.in>. Please use the already provided user id and password to log in. Then click on the RTI Application menu as shown in the picture below.

The screenshot shows the 'RTI - Online Certificate Course' application form. The header includes the course title and a 'RIGHT TO INFORMATION' logo. A navigation bar contains links: Home, Course, Reports, Help, Change Password, and Logout. Below this, a user profile section shows '7 day Course' and 'RTI Application' with the user name 'Deep Chandan A (120036)'. The main form area is titled 'RTI APPLICATION' and contains several fields: 'State/UT' and 'Department' (both dropdown menus), 'Address of the Department/Office where RTI application has been filed for inspection of records pertaining to disclosures made under Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act' (text area), 'Application Fee (in Rs.)' (text input), 'Mode of Payment of fee' (dropdown menu), 'Date of filing RTI application' (date input), 'Scanned copy of RTI Application' (file upload), 'Date of receiving acknowledgment' (date input), 'Scanned copy of Acknowledgment Received' (file upload), 'Date of receipt of information' (date input), and 'Scanned copy of information Received' (file upload). A large text area at the bottom is for a 'Brief of the details of the information received and the experience faced during the process (Maximum 1000 characters)'. A 'Submit' button is at the bottom right. A note at the bottom states: 'Note : All Fields indicated with * are mandatory. Upload jpg format only. File size should be below 25kb'. The footer mentions 'Designed & Developed by Centre for Good Governance'.

Now please upload the scanned copy of the following documents.

- RTI application submitted by you
- Acknowledgement received from the public authority upon submission of RTI application
- Response received from the public authority (if the response is more than two pages, a candidate is requested to upload only one or two pages showing the signature of the PIO of the public authority)

Now the uploaded scanned copies of the documents submitted by the candidate will be vetted by a screening committee at the Centre for Good Governance (CGG), Hyderabad. This may take upto one week. Upon validation from CGG, a candidate will be intimated through e-mail to start taking the 15-day course.

About the Course

The 15-day online course on RTI is a joint initiative of Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), Government of India and the Centre for Good Governance (CGG), Hyderabad.

The primary objective of the course is to make the people aware on the salient features of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. As has already been said, this is to reiterate that while the 7-day course is introductory in nature, the 15-day course is extensive and with a hands-on orientation whereby candidates have to practically apply the RTI Act during the course. In other words, the 15-day course is based on the principle of "learning while doing".

The course will be useful to both government employees and common citizens.

Salient Features of the Course

1. The online course is meant for fifteen days.
2. It is open to citizens of India.
3. As an online course it can be accessed from anywhere with a computer and an internet connection. The course is open 24 X 7 hours for whole 7 days.
4. Anyone interested in taking up this online course can visit <http://rtiocc.cgg.gov.in> and follow the instructions as have already been discussed. Upon receiving the e-mail intimation to start the 15-day course, a candidate can start taking the course. The fifteen day time will be counted from the day on which a candidate first accesses the course. For example, if you access the course on 01.01.2013 you can access the course up to 2359 hrs. of 15.01.2013.
5. The 15-days course is divided into **15** chapters. At the end of each chapter there will be **5** chapter-end quiz questions. A candidate has to answer at least **3** questions correctly in order to be able to move the next chapter.
6. Besides a candidate is required to conduct a pro-active disclosure study of any public authority dealing with public service delivery activities/programmes like Municipalities, Panchayats, Civil Supplies Department, Drinking Water Supply Department and Public Works Department. It may be noted that the public authority for which the pro-active disclosure study will be carried out must have its disclosures made on the web. This means that the public authority a candidate chooses here may differ from that where RTI application has been filed by the candidate in the

beginning.

- **As the course material will be available in downloadable formats, it is requested the candidates may download the material for future references.**

About System Requirements

- Internet Browser: Internet Explorer 7.0 or higher version, OR Mozilla Firefox 2. OR Google Chrome

(These are free downloads. If you do not have any of the above browsers please download it from the internet.)

- PDF Acrobat Reader: As the course content is in PDF format, please ensure that your system has "Adobe Acrobat Reader" OR "foxit" to enable you to read the content.

(These are free downloads. If you do not have any of the above browsers please download it from the internet.)

(Before starting the course please ensure that your system has the above requirements and then login into the system with the user-id and password communicated to you through e-mail.)

About the Homepage

Click here

The homepage will appear as shown in the adjacent picture. Read the instructions carefully given on the homepage before logging in. Once you are sure that you have read the instructions carefully and your system has been enabled with all requisite software, please type down your user name and password as communicated to you in e-mail and then click on "Login" as shown in the picture.

After logging in with the used id and password, the following page will appear.

You are now ready to start the online course. Before starting to take the online course it is suggested that you change your password which you can remember. For changing password, please go to the menu "Change Password" and follow the directions given.

About Accessing the Online Course

- Go to the Menu 'Course'.
- Select '15 Day Course' from the drop down menu. You will find course instructions. Please read the instructions carefully before clicking on "start course" button. This will enable you to access the course. The fifteen day time will be counted from now. For example, if you access the course on 01.01.2013 you can access the course up to 2359 hrs. of 15.01.2013.
- Select Chapter 1 and proceed on to read through the material.
- At the end you have to answer the chapter-end quiz questions. There will be **5** quiz questions out of which you have to answer **3** questions successfully in order to be able to move to next chapter.
- Once you have completed Chapter 1, you are now eligible to move to the Chapter 2 which will be activated. Likewise you can complete all fifteen chapters.
- Go to the Menu 'Reports' to see the correct answers to the quiz questions after you take the quiz test at the end of each chapter.
- The 'Help' menu will give you access to this user manual and also to some frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the RTI Act, 2005.

About the Pro-active Disclosure Study

As has already been expressed, one of the primary objectives of the 15-day course is to give practical orientation to the candidates about the implementation of the RTI Act, 2005.

While conducting a study on pro-active disclosures made under Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act, 2005 by a Public Authority, the candidate is advised to choose such a public authority who has disclosed the information in the web so that the evaluator can have access to the same.

Once you have decided the public authority please read out the followings very carefully as to how to conduct the study and submit the report.

1. RTI Act 2005 and Proactive Disclosure

The Right to Information Act, 2005 seeks to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority.

An important aspect of the Act pertains to the obligation of public authorities to ***proactively*** disclose information to the public. **The RTI Act mandates every public authority to:**

- Disclose information as required under the 17 sub-clauses of section 4 (1) (b).
- Publish all relevant facts while formulating important policies or announcing the decisions which affect public [Section 4(1) (c)]
- Provide reasons for its administrative or quasi-judicial decisions to affected persons [Section 4(1) (d)]
- Update the information provided under Section 4(1) (b) every year. [Section 4(1) (b)(xvii)]
- Take steps to provide the information *suo motu* to the public at regular intervals so that public has minimum resort to the use of this Act to obtain information. [Section 4(2)]
- Disseminate information widely and in a form and manner easily accessible to the public. [Section 4(3)]
- Provide information in the local language and adopt the most effective method of communication for dissemination of information.
- Make information accessible to the extent possible in electronic format with the concerned Public Information Officer, available free of cost or at such cost of the medium or the prescribed print cost price. [Section 4(4)]

Under **Section 4(1) (b)**, every public authority is mandated to publish the following categories of information within one hundred and twenty days from the enactment of the Act,-

1. Particulars of the Public Authority
2. Powers & duties of officers & employees
3. Procedure followed in decision making
4. Norms for discharge of functions
5. Rules, regulations, instructions, manuals and records under its control/ used by employees while discharging functions
6. Categories of documents held by the Authority or which are under its control
7. Arrangement for consultation with or representation by the members of the public in relation to the formulation of policy or implementation thereof
8. Boards, Councils, Committees and Other Bodies constituted as part of the Public
9. Directory of Officers and employees
10. Monthly Remuneration received by officers & employees including system of compensation
11. Budget allocated to each agency including all plans, proposed expenditures and reports on disbursements made etc.
12. Manner of execution of subsidy programmes
13. Particulars of recipients of concessions, permits or authorisation granted by the Public Authority
14. Information available in electronic form
15. Particulars of facilities available to citizens for obtaining information
16. Names, designations and other particulars of public information officers
17. Any other useful information.

2. Why Audit of Proactive Disclosure is required

In practice, however, it has been observed that, **implementation of proactive disclosure** under the Act by public authorities has been rather patchy and of poor quality. The following issues regarding proactive disclosure need to be addressed.

- Total Non-disclosure/ Non-compliance
- Partial disclosure
- Not updating information in time
- Poor efforts at dissemination of information

To address these issues, there is need for regular audit of the quality of proactive disclosure made by Public Authorities under the provisions of the RTI Act.

Audit of Proactive Disclosure is important as it can

- a. Foster better compliance with the provisions of the RTI Act relating to proactive disclosure
- b. Help identify information gaps in the proactive disclosure of public authorities

..... and thereby inculcate a culture of transparency and openness in the functioning of public authorities.

3. Audit Methodology

3.1 Classification of Disclosure Parameters

There is need to identify and categorise parameters of disclosure with the view to segregate them on the basis of their relative importance. Based on a rational examination of the provisions for proactive disclosure, the parameters of disclosure have been segregated into three basic categories. Based on the relative importance of the three categories, different weightages have been accorded to the different categories which will be used as part of the quantitative assessment of proactive disclosure made by the public authority being audited.

Sl. No.	Category	Importance	Reasons why	Weightage
1.	A Category	High	Information on these parameters has high relevance for the public.	0.5
2.	B Category	Medium	Information on these parameters may have reasonable importance for the public.	0.3
3.	C Category	Low	Information on these parameters has relatively low/limited relevance for the public (or both).	0.2

The methodology involves assessment of quality of proactive disclosure on **25 parameters**.

- There are **10 A Category** parameters for assessment
- There are **8 B Category** parameters for assessment
- There are **7 C Category** parameters for assessment

A Category Indicators (High Importance)	B Category Indicators (Medium Importance)	C Category Indicators (Low Importance)
1. Language in which Information Manual/ Handbook available	1. Form of accessibility of Information Manual/ Handbook u/s 4 (1) b	1. Particulars of its organization, functions and duties [Section 4(1) (b) (i)]
2. When was the information Manual/ Handbook last updated?	2. Whether Information Manual/ Handbook available free or not	2. Powers & Duties of its officers & employees [Section 4(1) (b) (ii)]
3. Dissemination of information to the public [Section 4 (3)]	3. Rules, regulations, instructions, manuals and records for discharging functions [Section 4(1) (b) (v)]	3. Consultation with or representation of the public in policy formulation or implementation [Section 4(1) (b) (vii)]
4. Procedure followed in decision making process [Section 4(1) (b) (iii)]	4. Categories of documents held by the authority under its control [Section 4(1) (b) (vi)]	4. Boards, Councils, Committees and Other Bodies constituted [Section 4(1) (b) (viii)]
5. Norms for discharge of functions [Section 4(1) (b) (iv)]	5. Information available in electronic form [Section 4(1) (b) (xiv)]	5. Directory of Officers and employees [Section 4(1) (b) (ix)]
6. Budget allocated to each agency including all plans, proposed expenditures and disbursements made etc. [Section 4(1) (b) (xi)]	6. Particulars of facilities available to citizens for obtaining information [Section 4(1) (b) (xv)]	6. Monthly Remuneration received by officers & employees including system of compensation [Section 4(1) (b) (x)]
7. Manner of execution of subsidy programmes [Section 4(1) (b) (xii)]	7. Any other information as may be prescribed u/s 4(1) (b) (xvii)	7. Names, designations and other particulars of public information officers [Section 4(1) (b) (xvi)]
8. Particulars of recipients of concessions, permits or authorisations granted [Section 4(1) (b) (xiii)]	8. Details regarding receipt & disposal of RTI applications	
9. Are important policies or decisions which affect public informed to them? [Section 4(1) (c)]		
10. Are reasons for administrative or		

quasi-judicial decisions taken, communicated to affected persons [Section 4(1) (d)]		
--	--	--

The methodology involves both quantitative & qualitative assessments.

3.2 Quantitative Assessment

- For each of the generic & specific indicator/parameter, a **3-point quantitative rating scale (0:1:2)** has been evolved to assess quality/extent of compliance on that parameter. A higher score indicates better compliance on that parameter and vice-versa.
- Add the Scores across all parameters within a particular category to get the **Category Score** (A, B or C).
- Calculate the **Maximum Possible Category Score** for the category of parameters. If any parameter is **not applicable** for a public authority, then the maximum possible score to be considered will be accordingly reduced by an amount of 2 times the no. of parameters not applicable.
 - For example: For A Category parameters, maximum possible score is 20 (10×2) if all parameters are applicable. In case one parameter does not apply to the public authority, maximum possible score for the category will be 18 (9×2).
- Calculate the **Category Percentage** for each category of parameters which is simply the category score as a proportion of maximum possible category score.
 - For example: If the Category Score on A Category parameters is 14 and the maximum possible category score is 20 (i.e. all parameters apply) then the Category Percentage is $14/20 (\times 100) = 70\%$.
- Lastly, apply the **weightages** (i.e. 0.5 for Category A, 0.3 for Category B and 0.2 for Category C) to the respective category percentages to generate the **Weighted Category Percentages**.
 - For example: If the Category Percentages for A, B & C parameters are 50%, 60% & 70% respectively, the Weighted Category Percentages would be:
 - A Category: $50\% \times 0.5 = 25\%$

- B Category: $60\% \times 0.3 = 18\%$
- C Category: $70\% \times 0.2 = 14\%$
- Add the weighted category percentages to get the **Final Score**.
 - For example: In the case above, the final score would be $25\% + 18\% + 14\% = 57\%$
- Identify the **Grade** that the public authority falls into on the basis of the Final Score obtained. The table below provides the grading methodology.

GRADES	FINAL SCORE	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
A	81%-100% of Maximum Possible	Highly Transparent & RTI compliant
B	61%-80% of Maximum possible	Reasonably Transparent & RTI compliant
C	41%-60% of Maximum possible	Limited transparency & compliance with RTI
D	0-40% of Maximum possible	Poor levels of transparency & compliance with RTI

- For example: In the case above, the public authority would be graded as 'C' as the final score (57%) lies between 41%-60%.

3.3 Qualitative Assessment

On each parameter, qualitative observations can be recorded in order to:

- a. validate the rating given on that parameter;
- b. record observations & inferences; and
- c. identify information gaps on various parameters of disclosure.

The auditor needs to remember the following points while recording the qualitative remarks on each parameter.

- Please provide proper & clear remarks or directions - do not give ambiguous statements.
- You may record detailed remarks on any parameter if you feel it is warranted - you may attach additional sheets to the audit proforma.
- Try as much as possible to give actionable directions/suggestions so that the public authority can initiate action in that regard easily.
- When pointing out information gaps, please check with the public authority whether that information exists or whether such information can be compiled by the public authority.

The auditor may also record any other observations or remarks at the overall level, after the completion of assessment on all parameters.

4. Audit Process

5. Points to Remember

- Assessment of proactive disclosures must be based on **objective** evaluation only. Refrain from making arbitrary remarks/observations and awarding scores on the basis of a biased or opinionated judgment.
- Before assessing a public authority, **follow the audit process** explained above. Understand the public authority; examine the records/documents published by the authority and map the information that the authority must disclose under the Right to Information Act.
- Check each indicator **whether it is applicable** for the public authority and then use the audit proforma to assess the quality of disclosure. In case of uncertainty, exclude the parameter from assessment and reduce the maximum possible score accordingly.
- Remember to **validate** each of your ratings and give appropriate reasons for each of your rating.
- Focus on highlighting the **gaps in information disclosure** so that the public authority would be benefited from the audit and not intimidated by this exercise.
- This exercise could be **repeated regularly** so that audit of proactive disclosures becomes a standardized method of checking/monitoring the implementation of the relevant provisions of the RTI Act.

Now that you have undertaken the audit of the pro-active disclosures made by the public authority and arrived at certain conclusion about the quality of disclosures made, please explain the your observations in the space provided. Please note that your explanation should be limited to 5000 characters.

Once you are done with your explanation, please click on the "submit" button. This will lead to a "feedback form". The Feedback Form has to be filled in by the candidate and submitted failing which evaluation of your report will not be carried out.

After successfully completing the chapter-end quiz questions, submitting the report on pro-active disclosure study and feedback form your paper will be evaluated on a set criteria. On successful completion you will be issued with an online certificate.

Good Luck!